



# News Release

**JOINT AREA SUPPORT GROUP – CENTRAL**

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## **Clinic dedicated to first Army nurse killed in combat since Vietnam**

BAGHDAD — A U.S. Army officer with Camden, N.J., roots, the first Army nurse killed in combat since Vietnam, was honored during a dedication ceremony for a troop medical clinic in Baghdad Aug. 13.

The clinic was named in honor of Capt. Maria Ortiz, who died during a mortar attack in Baghdad's International Zone on July 10, 2007, while returning from physical fitness training. Ortiz was buried in Arlington National Cemetery on Aug. 9, 2007.

Ortiz deployed to Iraq in 2006 and was assigned to Ibn Sina Hospital in Baghdad. She worked at the hospital when it was featured on the HBO television series "Baghdad ER."

Ortiz was remembered as an outstanding medical professional by the chief of the Army Nurse Corps.

"Each person who will work within these walls will know her spirit and her passion for standing by our service members and providing the best health care possible to those who choose to wear the cloth of our nation," said Maj. Gen. Patricia Horoho in a letter read at the ceremony. "May you continue to find comfort in the memories of Maria and all the service members' lives that she saved and touched."

Ortiz's family was unable to attend the ceremony, but a speaker at the dedication extended a message to them.

"The loss of your daughter, sister and fiancée was and still is a difficult situation for all of us," said Lt. Col. Noel Cardenas, commander of the 421st Multifunctional Medical Battalion. "Capt. Maria Ortiz left her mark on our nation, the country of Iraq, the Army medical department, the Army nurse corps, and all the soldiers that have served with her and with everyone that is here today. The dedication of this clinic in her name is just a small token of what we owe you, her memory and her service to our nation."

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## Clinic dedicated to N.J. nurse

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Ortiz was born in Camden, N.J., in 1967, but was raised in Puerto Rico. She enlisted in the U.S. Army Reserve in 1991 and entered active duty in the Army in 1993. She earned her nursing degree from the University of Puerto Rico and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in 1999.

“I didn’t want her memory to be forgotten,” said Ortiz’s twin sister Maria Luisa Medina in a telephone interview from New Jersey. “The dedication of this clinic in her name is an honor.”

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Col. Steven Bensend, JASG-C commander, Lt. Col. Noel Cardenas, 421st Multifunctional Medical Battalion commander, and Col. Michael Calder, Chief of Clinical Operations, Task Force 1st Medical Brigade, unveil the sign for the Ortiz Consolidated Medical Clinic during a ceremony held Aug. 13 on Forward Operating Base Prosperity, Baghdad, Iraq. *U.S. Army photo by Spc. Michelle Gonzalez.*



Col. Michael Calder, the top Army nurse in Iraq, gives his remarks during a dedication ceremony held Aug. 13 on Forward Operating Base Prosperity, Baghdad. The FOB’s troop medical clinic was renamed in honor of Capt. Maria Ortiz, the first Army nurse killed in combat since Vietnam. *U.S. Army photo by Spc. Michelle Gonzalez.*



A plaque at the entrance of the Forward Operating Base Prosperity clinic honors the memory of Capt. Maria Ortiz. *U.S. Army photo by Spc. Michelle Gonzalez.*

**Higher resolution photos available on Wisconsin National Guard Web site:**

**<http://dma.wi.gov/dma/> or contact [timothy.donovan@iraq.centcom.mil](mailto:timothy.donovan@iraq.centcom.mil)**